THE
Case of Compulsion,
IN
Matters of Religion,
Truly Stated.

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THE
Caſe of Compulſion,
IN
Matters of Religion, &c.

AMONG all the Diſcoveries that have bee made in this Age, of the Books that had bee eſteemed loſt, there is none, ſince that of th Epiſtle of St. *Clemens*, that has been receive with more joy than this of *Lactantius's* Book of th *Death of the Perſecutors*, for which the World is behold ng to the happy Induſtry of the moſt learned *Baluzius*. vho having found this treaſure, not only communicate t to the World, but enriched it with his learned Notes oy which he has added a new Eſſay, to the many tha ıave already appeared, of his great Sincerity, his pro found Learning, and of his ſolid Judgment: It ha been ſince that time reprinted at *Oxford*, with ſhorte Notes; in which there are many happy Conjecture nade both for ſupplying ſome of the Words that wer worn out of the Manuſcript Copy, and for correctin ome Paſſages, which the Copyer perhaps writ wrong nd it is upon that Edition that this Tranſlation i nade.

The Importance of this Book will be eaſily appr ended, by thoſe who conſider that *Lactantius* was th politeſt Writer of his time, in whom one finds ſom

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what very like *Auguſtus*'s Age revived; he had alſo particular Opportunities of being well informed of his Subject, by the Poſt to which he was advanced in *Conſtantine*'s Court, of being his Son's Tutor. It is true his Eloquence carries him often into ſtrains that become an Orator, better than a Hiſtorian: for he has a heat of ſtile, that ought not to be imitated by one that would write Hiſtory. But he ſeems to have deſigned this Book to be a mixed ſort of Writing, between a Diſcourſe and a Hiſtory; ſo that the Figures that agree not to the one, may be allowed to the other.

The Account that he gives of Saint *Peter*'s coming to *Rome*, cuts off the Fable of his being there for five and tweaty Years: but if what he ſays of things at ſo great a diſtance from his own time, is not thought ſo Authentical, and if his Authority ſeems not ſtrong enongh to cut off all thoſe Perſecutions that are ſaid to have riſen between *Domitian*'s Reign and *Decius*'s, ſince he repreſents all that Interval as a time of a long Peace to the Chriſtians; yet we muſt at leaſt ſuppoſe him, to have beeu much better informed of that which fell out during the laſt Perſecution; ſo that the beginning which he aſſigns to it cuts off all thoſe Legends of Martars, that (as is pretended) ſuffered before that Year, and as we cannot doubt of the time in which he tells us the Perſecution began, ſo no more ought we to call in queſtion the Limits that he ſets to it; and therefore ſince he tells us, that *Conſtance* ordered only, that the Churches in which the Chriſtians held their Aſſemblies, ſhould be pulled down, and that he would not carry the Perſecution further againſt the Chriſtians themſelves; and ſince he excepts the Gaules out of thoſe Provinces that felt the Fury of thoſe Edicts, we ſee what a number of Legends there are to be cut off. For the truth is, that very ſoon after this Perſecution was over, ſome that loved either to make (or at leaſt to report) very tragical Stories concerning it, ſeemed to give no Bounds

to their Invention upon a Subject that was fruitful enough of it self, and so needed not to have been swelled up by such Additions. The Destruction of the Records that the Christians kept, which were so carefully searched after during this Persecution, gave some colour for those pretended Discoveries; for it served turn to give them Credit, to say, that such Relations had been preserv'd from the Searches of those Inquisitors, and so that they were by Accident found out in some Corner, where very probably those that forged them, both laid them and found them: and the matter would no doubt have been received with more Credit, if some Dream or Vision had been pretended, as that which had made the Discovery. Of all those Legends none is more copious, nor less credible than that of the *Thebean Legion*, and that upon many Accounts; but as the silence, not only of *Eusebius* and *Sulpitius Severus*, but of all the other Writers of the fourth Century, gave a just Prejudice against a Story that begun not to appear till the middle of the fifth Century, so the positive Testimony of Lactantius, who excepts the Gaules from the Persecution, puts an end to the Fable. For though he shews so great a disposition to speak well of Constance, that this may seem to lessen the Authority of one, who to make his Court with the Son, would naturally raise the Father's Character; yet so remarkable a transaction as that was, could not have been suppresst with any sort of Decency, by one that must have certainly heard of it if it was true.

The false appearance of a greatness of mind, that was inferred from Diocletian's resigning the Empire, is also taken off by this Relation; since it is plain, that both Diocletian's Brain was turned, and that he was forced to it; so that his Resignation was not the Effect of his Philosophy, but of the Unnatural Ambition of his Son in Law Maximian.

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The Subject of this Diſcourſe, and the Application to which a Tranſlation of it tyed me, together with the preſent ſcene of Affairs, led my mind very naturally into more general Thoughts. If the Characters of thoſe ancient Perſecutors, ſuch as theſe, that they had delivered themſelves up to all the Brutalities of ſenſual Pleaſure, that they had ruined their Subjects by ſevere Impoſitions for maintaining vaſt Armies, that they had in their Wars, ſhewed more care than was decent in preſerving themſelves out of all Danger, that they were weak to the moſt exceſſive Flatteries, the profuſeneſs of their Expence in the raiſing of coſtly Buildings, their great Succeſs in a Courſe of many Years, their Superſtitious and fearful Tempers, and to crown all, the Cruelty that they practis'd in the Perſecution, to which they were uneaſily drawn, and in which they begun at firſt with requiring all to abjure, beſides many other particulars; all theſe, I ſay, inſenſibly carry ones thoughts to make Parallels between ſome Modern Perſecutors, and thoſe that are here ſet forth: but if the reſpect due to their ſublime Character makes one drive away thoſe leſs decent ſallies of his mind, to which he is carried before he is aware, yet the Importance of this matter leads to ſpeculations that are more General, and by conſequence leſs offenſive. And ſince the Melancholy State of things at preſent carried me in thoſe Intervals in which I diſcontinued the dry Work of tranſlating, to conſider the Grounds on which thoſe cruel and perſecuting Doctrines and Practices are founded, together with the Motives from which they riſe, the Characters that accompany them, and the Effects that followed them; I thought I might be forgiven a little, if I took the liberty to ſwell up the bulk of this ſmall Book with a Preface of ſome length; in which my deſign is not only to expoſe this ill-natur'd Principle, and to ſhew, that where-ever it is authoriſed, it is a more infallible mark of an Anti-

chriſtian Church, than all the other Characters are of an Infallible Church, to which thoſe pretend, that have died themſelves ſo red in the Blood of others; but likewiſe to form in the Minds of thoſe who hate Perſecution, perhaps only becauſe they either feel it, or are afraid of it, ſuch a Notion of this Matter, as may preſerve them from falling into the ſame Exceſſes if a Revolution in the State of Affairs ſhould put it in their Power, to uſe others as hardly as they have been uſed by them. It has been often obſerved, that tho' a Plaſter Moderation is the Sanctuary of all the Unfortunate, yet their Fortunes came no ſooner to be changed, but that they inſenſibly got into that Principle which was ſo much decried by themſelves, when their Affairs were in an ill condition; as if the only quarrel that they had to Perſecution, was becauſe they had not the managing of it themſelves. I will treat this Subject with all the cloſeneſs that the Matter deſerves, or that I am capable of; and will avoid the ſerving up what I am to propoſe with the garniſhings of the fine ſayings of others; for as that would carry me too far, ſo a good Reaſon is ſo much a better thing, than a round Period, or a laboured Sentence, that the Mind finds it ſelf ſatisfied with the one, whereas the Fancy is only pleaſed with the other.

All Perſecution riſes out of an Impatience of Spirit, which makes a Man leſs able to bear Contradiction. There is a Tyranny in moſt Mens nature, which makes Mens nature, which makes them deſire to ſubdue all others by the ſtrength of their underſtandings; and ſuch Men have an implacable hatred to all that do not render themſelves to their Reaſons; and think that they are affronted when other Men refuſe to ſubmit to them; ſo that he would ſtrike at Perſecution in its root, muſt begin here, and endeavour to ſoften Men, eſpecially towards thoſe who differ from them in matters of Religion. This Imperious temper, when

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it works upon Subjects of Religion, finds ſomewhat to raiſe its ſpleen, that was of it ſelf Impetuous enough before; and that which is called Fury and Rage, when it is imployed in other Diſputes, comes to be called Zeal when it is turned towards the Theories that relate to another World.

But when we conſider what a ſublime thing *Divine Truth* is, and what a poor low thing the *Mind of Man* is, we ſhall ſee Cauſe to blunt a little the edge of our Spirits, if they are too ſharp in ſuch matters. Man is much governed by Fancy, and Fancy follows the texture of the animal Spirits, which renders many more capable of apprehending Objects that are ſome way proportioned to them, and more diſpoſed to follow them; ſo that *Temper* prepares Men for ſome Opinions, and prepoſſeſſes them againſt others. With the greater part of Mankind, *Education* is ſo powerful, that they are ſcarce able ever to overcome it; and if *Education* and *Temper* have hit together, it will require an extraordinary elevation to reſcue a Man from their force. Men likewiſe receive with their Impreſſions of Religion ſuch a reſpect for them, as makes them look on every thought that calls them in queſtion as criminal: and when Perſons are bred up to diſquiet themſelves with Scruples, if they have ſo much as made a doubt of their Religion, it is hard to ſee them adhere ſo firmly to the *Principles* of their *Education*, which ſtick ſo faſt to the worſt ſort of Men, that even Atheiſts themſelves, after all the pains they take to get rid of them, cannot ſhake them off ſo entirely, but that they will be apt to return oft upon them. Men that think much, and that reaſon well, that are freed from the biaſs that Intereſt, Honour, Kindred and Cuſtom do give them, and that have leiſure to examine matters carefully, may indeed get above all theſe: yet there are ſo few that can do this, and there are yet ſo much fewer that will do it; that it is rather a Wonder to ſee ſo many change their perſwaſions, than

to see so few do it. And indeed it is so sublime a *Theory* to think on God and his Attributes and Works, or to think of another State, and of the Way that leads to it, that till God furnishes out a new Mission of *Apostles* with a Measure of those extraordinary Gifts which he poured out on the great *Pentecost*; it is not easy to imagine how the Conversion of *Heathen Nations* should be made. For tho' the *Idolatry* of some of these is extream gross, yet their *Priests* have such symbolical Significations for all these Rites, that they do much diminish the Horror which is raised by the first sight of them in the minds of Strangers; and since the chief grounds, upon which we prove the *Christian Religion*, are taken from the *Prophecies* in the *Old Testament*, and their Accomplishment in the *New*, from the Evidence that was given concerning the *Miracles*, the *Death*, and the *Resurrection* of *Christ*, which we confirm from the collateral proofs of the State of that time, of the Writings of the Enemies of this *Religion*, and of that Succession of Authors that in all the Ages that have past since, have mentioned those Matters, and cited those *Books* which we hold to be Divine. All this is so evident to those who can make the Enquiry, that it is strange to find how any one can withstand it; but to *Barbarians*, who know nothing of it, and who have no way of informing themselves concerning it, all this can signify nothing. So that in order to the convincing their Understandings, (for I do not treat of God's secret Methods in touching their Consciences) I do not see how we should expect that they should yield easily, unless there were a new Power of working *Miracles* conferred on those who labour in this Work, And what noise soever the *Missionaries* may make with their *Miracles* in those remote Parts, it is plain, these are all Impostures; for the most necessary of all other *Miracles* for the Conversion of strange Nations, being *the Gift of Tongues*, with which the Apostles were so wonderfully furnisht

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at firſt, and ſince they all are forced to acknowledge, that this is wanting to them, we have all poſſible Reaſon to conclude, that God would not change his Methods, or qualify Men to work Wonders, and not give them that which is the moſt ſenſible and the moſt uſeful of all others, towards that end for which he authoriſes them.

But to return from this Digreſſion, a Man is ſcarce the Maſter of his own Thoughts: Habit. Conſtitution and other things do ſo concur, that he cannot open his Eyes to new Objects, nor ſee them in a new Light other that in which he has been accuſtomed to view them; and a Man can no more change his Notions of things, becauſe a Set of new Opinions would accomodate him better, than he can change the reliſh that his ſenſes, his ear or his taſt has in their Objects; a Man may prevaricate, but he ſtill thinks as he thinks; and cannot think otherwiſe, becauſe he would have himſelf do ſo: But if a Man is not maſter of his own mind, much leſs is any other Man the maſter of it. No Man has that Superiority over any other Man's Reaſon, as to expect that it ſhould always accommodate it ſelf to his: and the ſevereſt exerciſe of Tyranny muſt ſtill leave the thoughts at liberty: the forcing a Man to ſay, or do otherwiſe than he thinks, by threatnings, the execution of which is above his force to endure, is only they delivering over ſuch a perſon to the rack of his own Conſcience here, and to all thoſe miſeries hereafter, which muſt be the portion of Hypocrites, and of Diſſemblers with God or Man. Nor is there ſuch an infallible Diſtinction in one man's nature from another, that the one is more like to be in the right than the other: Since therefore, among all thoſe that differ, ſome muſt be in the wrong, thoſe that have the power in their hands, may poſſibly be of the wrong ſide, and in that caſe all their Severity is turned againſt the Truth, and thoſe who believe it: And ſince God makes the Sun to

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ſhine, and the Rain to fall on the juſt as well as the unjuſt, *Gideon*'s reaſoning may be applied to this matter, *if Baal be as God, let him plead for himſelf*; and the force of *Gamaliel*'s Argument, *that if it is of Men, it will come to nought; and if it is of God, we muſt not fight againſt him.* As it ſilenced an *Aſſembly* of very fierce *Perſecutors*, ſo it is full as ſtrong now, as it was then: For Reaſon is eternal, and changeth not. It ſeems alſo plain, that thoſe Actions which concern humane Society, belong indeed to the Authority of the Magiſtrate; but that our thoughts, with relation to God, and ſuch actions as ariſe out of thoſe thoughts, and in which others have no inteteſt, are God's immediate Province; and can belong to no other Juriſdiction. God only know, our thoughts, as he only can change them; ſo that a Magiſtrate by encroaching upon them, breaks in upon God's propriety, and upon that eſſential right of humane nature, of worſhipping God according to our conviction, which is, in us antecedent to all humane Government, and never become ſubject to it.

But if the general *Theories* from the nature of Man give a very favourable view of what is now advanced, the Characters of the *Chriſtian Religion*, and the many expreſs Texts that are in it ſhould determine this matter more poſitively. The Religion reveal'd by *Moſes* conſiſted in temporal Promiſes, an earthly Canaan, and all the bleſſings of this Life; ſo that ſince the *Jews* had all theſe things by Virtue of it; and therefore it was as juſt, that a *Jew* ſhould have been put to Death for the violation of thoſe Laws, as it is lawful for us to put a Man to death that coins Money: yet as for Opinions the Caſe was different, even among the *Jews*; and therefore, tho the Doctrines of the Sadduces ſtruck at the Foundations of all Religion, the Phariſees, when they had the upper hand, never carried the matter ſo far as to proceed to extremities againſt them. But what Severities ſoever might have agreed with the

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Canaan, no temporal bleſſings, nor the Rules for
il Society: but having the World in the poſſeſſion
heir temporal Rights, it only came to ſuperadd to
ſe the Doctrines and Rules of a Divine Diſcipline,
n vvhich the Happineſs or Miſerier of another State
depend. Novv it ſeems to be an unconteſted Rule
Juſtice, that in whatſoever Society one is engaged,
violation of the Laws of that Society can only in-
a Forfeiture of all that one had or might have ex-
ted by virtue of it: but this cannot be carried ſo
, as to make one forfeit all that he holds by virtue
any other Society, to which he belongs; and there-
e ſince we hold our temporal Eſtates and Liberties
t by virtue of our Chriſtianity, but as we are the
embers of the State or Kingdom to which we belong,
r doing any thing that is only contrary to our Reli-
on, may well make us forfeit all that belongs to us
virtue of our Baptiſmal Covenant; but this ought
t to be carried ſo far as to cut of thoſe Rights that
e have antecedent to our Chriſtianity, as we are Men,
nd the Subjects of a civil Government. Our Saviour
nfirmed all this by ſaying, That his Kingdom was
t of this World; that he came not to deſtroy, but
ſave; and by giving this Rule of Juſtice, of doing
others that which we would have others do to us:
hich would ſoon let all perſecutors ſee how different-
they act to it: but above all, our Saviour has made
he Doctrines of Meekneſs and Charity, ſuch main In-
redients in his Goſpel, that he has made them the
Characters by which his *Diſciples* may be every where
known, and his *Spirit* of Love is ſo diffuſed thro' the
whole Writings of the N. Teſtament, that how hard
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ſages that are in them, yet there is no Ambiguity at all
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God; and that as the Kingdom of God, or the Goſpel,
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and of *Drinks*, but in Righteouſneſs, Peace and Joy in
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n one conſiders the firſt beginnings of the Chriſtian
the Mahometan Religion, he is not a little ſurpriſed
e the changes that have befallen both. The bleſſed
hor of our Holy Religion, as he was a Pattern for
nility and Charity, ſo he was made perfect thro'
erings; and his Religion, as it contains precepts ſute-
to the Example that he gave, which are ſet down
he plaineſt and moſt perſuading Expreſſions poſſi-
ſo it gained its firſt Glory in the World, and ob-
ed its chief Triumphs over it, by the Meekneſs and
dleneſs, and the Love and Charity of thoſe who
raced it; on the contrary, the Mahometan Religi-
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ceneſs of rage, and was carried on by the Sword,
hich Mahomet pretended that he was ſent of God
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e Mahometan Religion, are by their Conſtitution
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t not to take upon them to dictate, and to threat-
nd deſtroy thoſe vvho differ from them.

is indeed an amaſing thing, to ſee how much the
ſtian Church has departed from that Pattern; and
one conſiders the firſt beginnings of the Chriſtian
he Mahometan Religion, he is not a little ſurpriſed
the changes that have befallen both. The bleſſed
or of our Holy Religion, as he was a Pattern for
ility and Charity, ſo he was made perfect thro'
rings; and his Religion, as it contains precepts ſute-
to the Example that he gave, which are ſet down
e plaineſt and moſt perſuading Expreſſions poſſi-
ſo it gained its firſt Glory in the World, and ob-
d its chief Triumphs over it, by the Meekneſs and
leneſs, and the Love and Charity of thoſe who
aced it; on the contrary, the Mahometan Religi-
egan in the Perſon of that Impoſtor, with all the
eneſs of rage, and was carried on by the Sword,
hich Mahomet pretended that he was ſent of God
vert the World: The Nations that have receiv-
e Mahometan Religion, are by their Conſtitution
and barbarous; and yet how ſhameful a reverſe
e firſt beginning of the two Religions, is but too
e to the World; the Mahometans in a courſe of
l Ages are ſo much ſoftned, that inſtead of that
y with which their Religion appeared at firſt,

they

they are now ſo gentle, that thoſe of a Relig
which believe theirs to be only an Impoſture, liv
cure under them, and know the Price that the Lib
of their Conſcience muſt riſe to; and that being pa
they enjoy in all other reſpects the Protection of
Government, together with the publick Exerci
their Religion; whereas on the other hand, that
of the Chriſtian Church, that pretends the higheſt
ſo far departed from the Meekneſs of its Author,
of his firſt Followers, that notwithſtanding all the
liſhings of Learning and Civility that are in it, it is
the cruelleſt and the moſt implacable Society tha
ever yet appeared in the World; if there wer
other Evidences but this ſingle one, it is enoug
demonſtrate, how much that Body has departed
its firſt Inſtitution; and if our Saviour has give
a ſhort Abridgment of the Character of the De
theſe two qualities, that he is a Lyar and a Murd
then any Body of Men, that has decreed, that fa
not to be kept to Hereticks, and that has alſo
creed the Murder of ſo many Innocent Pe
who have done nothing againſt that Civil Socie
which they belong, that deſerves a forfeiture of
Lives; ſuch a Body, I ſay, if we may take our Sav
Character for a Rule, looks more like the Follo
of that fallen Spirit, than the Body of which the
of God is the Head. And when we conſide
plain and expreſs Words, in which the great Du
a Holy Life are delivered in Scripture, but moſt
ticularly thoſe of Love and Charity, and the Da
that are in many other paſſages of which the me
is more diſputable, it looks like an unaccountable
verſeneſs to ſee Men, who ſtill pretend to mak
Book their Rule, yet to be ſo viſibly faulty in ex
ing the one, and ſo exceſſively ſevere in oppoſi
other, of which I ſhall content my ſelf to give o
gle Inſtance.

Pope Leo the Tenth in the Reformation that he ſet ut, with the concurrence of the Lateran Council, or-er'd a ſevere Proſecution to be made of all Heretick, nd that all the Laws againſt them ſhould be put in xecution; but at the ſame time, he order'd ſuch ſlight uniſhment againſt thoſe that ſhould wilfully and pub-ickly Blaſpheme God and Chriſt, even tho' they re-aſped in it over and over again, that it is plain he had o mind to deter Men with too much ſeverity from the ractice of that which was ſo common in his own Court; a ſmall Fine, or the Forfeiture of the Profits f a Benefice, is all the puniſhment that he laid on the ne, even with Clergy-men relapſed in it. This may erve to ſhew, that tho' naturally one is apt to think Blaſphemy a much more heinous Crime than Hereſie, et a Pope, together with a Council, which they pre-end was General, made a Diſtinction in the puniſhing f them, which is very little for their Honour.

The Chriſtians did, during the firſt Ages, declare ighly againſt all Cruelty on the Account of a Diffe-ence of Perſuaſion in matters of Religion; and tho' heir Intereſt Naturally led them to this, yet we paſs very hard Judgment on thoſe times, if we think that hey were only of that mind, becauſe the Power was hen in the Hands of their Enemies. When the Em-ire turned Chriſtian, the very Heathen Worſhip was ot only tolerated for above a whole Age together, ut the Heathens themſelves continued to be in the hief Imployments of the Empire; and it is pleaſant o ſee how the Heathens, that had ſo long perſecuted he Chriſtians, and that had contrived the ſevereſt of ll the Perſecutions under *Julian*, which very probably ad been put in execution, if he had returned victori-ous from his *Perſian* Expedition, ſaw the State of hings no ſooner altered, than they began to imploy all heir Eloquence in the behalf of Toleration; as if Li-rty of Conſcience had been an eſſential Right of Mankind,

Mankind, from which they ought never to be cut off; and they carry'd this so far, as to pretend, that a difference in Religion tends more to the Honour of God than a Uniformity in it could do; and so they fancied, that a variety in it was acceptable to God.

The first severity that Christians practised upon one another, was the banishing of *Arius*, and a few of his Followers; it must be acknowledged, that this seems to be the utmost extent of Civil Authority in those matters; for certainly a Government may put such Persons out of its Protection, that are Enemies to its Peace, and so banish them upon great occasions, giving them leave to sell their Estates, and to carry away with them all that belongs to them; yet this being all that any Humane Government can claim, it ought not to be applied too easily nor rashly, till it is visible, that all other Remedies are ineffectual, and that the publick Safety can be no other way secured; but tho' this severity against *Arius* had no great effects, yet the *Arians* had no sooner the Power in their hands, than they put in practice first all the Contrivances of Craft and Fraud, together with many less crying Violences, under *Constance*, and they carried this afterwards to a more open Persecution under *Valens*; and after that, both in *Spain* and *Africk* it appeared, that a cruel Spirit was so inherent in that party, that it shewed it self as oft as ever they had it in their Power; but while *Valens* persecuted in his Division of the Empire, it is observed, that *Valentinian* his Brother thought it was enough to support the Orthodox, without persecuting the other; *Gratian* carried the matter further, and tolerated both almost equally. And in the happy turn under *Theodosius*, at what pains was St. *Gregory Nazianzene* to restrain the Orthodox from retaliating upon the *Arians* the ill treatment that they had suffered from them; and not only the *Novatians*, but even the *Arians*, continued to have their Churches in the Imperial Cities.

Cities. The first Instance of the Imploying the Secular Arm against Hereticks, that was set on by any of the Orthodox, was under the Reign of that bloody Tyrant *Maximus*, and it was managed by two such Scandalous Bishops, that their ill Lives is no small Prejudice against every thing that was carried on by such Instruments. This was condemned by the best Bishops of that Age, and the ill Effects of that Severity are very copiously marked by the Historian. One is unwilling, for the sake of those Ages, to reflect on the Rigour that appears in some Laws that are in the Code; yet the mild behaviour of *Atticus*, *Proclus*, and some other Bishops, is marked with the praises that were due to it; and it is probable, that those Laws were rather made to terrify, than that they should be executed.

The *Donatists*, after a Contest of above 120 Years continuance, that was managed at first more gently, grew at last so fierce and intolerable, that not being contented with their own Churches, they broke in upon the Churches of those of the Unity; and committed many Outrages on the Persons of some of the Bishops, putting out the Eyes of some, and leaving others for Dead; the Bishops upon that consulted, whether they ought to demand not only the Emperor's Protection, but the Application of the Laws made against Hereticks to the *Donatists*. St. *Austin* and some Bishops opposed this for some time; but they yielded at last; and these Laws were so severely executed, that not only the *Donatists* themselves complained heavily of them, but St. *Austin* in several Letters that he writ to the Magistrates upon this occasion, made the same complaints; he interceded very earnestly for the *Donatists*, and said, that *it detracted much from the Glory of the* Church, *that had received so much Honour from the sufferings of the* Martyrs, *to see others suffer upon the account of the* Church; and he told them plainly, that

if they did not proceed more moderately, the Biſhops would ſuffer all that could come upon them from the Rage of the Donatiſts, *rather than Complain any more to thoſe who acted ſo rigorouſly.* Yet tho St. *Auſtin* condemn'd the Exceſſes of the *Civil Magiſtrates* in ſome particulars, he ſet himſelf to juſtify Severity in General when it was imployed upon the account of Religion, and all the moderate Pleadings for Liberty, that are to be found either in *Tertullian*, *Cyprian*, and more copiouſly in our Author *Lactantius*, with relation to Heathens, and the like Reaſonings that are to be found in *Athanaſius*, *Hilary*, and *Luciſer*, with Relation to the Perſecutions of the *Arians*, were in a great meaſure forgot; St. *Auſtin* had a heat of Imagination, that was very copious, which way ſoever he turned it; and this was imployed chiefly in allegorifing Scripture, ſo as to bring together a vaſt number of proofs for every cauſe that he undertook; without troubling himſelf to examine critically what the true meaning of thoſe Paſſages might be; and he is ſo apt to run out in all his Reaſonings into exceſſive Amplifications, and into all the Figures of copious and uncorrect Eloquence, that it is no wonder to find that paſſage of our *Saviour* in the *Parable, compel them to enter in*, with ſome other places miſapplyed on this occaſion. With that *Father* the Learning of the *Weſtern Church* fell very low, ſo that his *Works* came to be more read in the ſucceeding Ages, than the Writings of all the other *Fathers*; and in this, as in other things, Men that knew not how to reaſon themſelves, contented themſelves with that laſie and cheap way of copying from him, and of depending on his Authority. The Incurſion of the *Northern Nations*, that overthrew the *Roman Empire*, and thoſe Poliſhings of Learning and Civility that fell with it, brought on a Night of Ignorance, that can ſcarce be apprehended, by thoſe who have not read the Writings of the following Ages: *Superſtition* grew upon the ruins of *Learning*, and eat up all. The fierce Tempers of the *Northern People* being muffled up in Ignorance, and wrought on by Superſtition, were eaſily levened with Cruelty; perhaps the *Holy Wars*, and what they obſerved in the Rage as well as in the Succeſſes of the *Saracens*, heightned this further; at laſt *Hereſie* came to be reckoned the greateſt of all Crimes; and as it condemned Men to everlaſting *Burning*, ſo it was thought that thoſe might be well anticipated by temporary ones of the *Inquiſitors* Kindling. It is true, the *Church* pretended that ſhe would ſhed no *Blood*; but all this was inſufferable jugling; for the *Churchmen* declared who were obſtinate or relapſed *Hereticks*; and the Secular Arm was required to be ever in readineſs to execute their Sentence. This was not only claimed by the *Biſhops*, but it was made a part of their Oath at their Conſecration, *that they ſhould Oppoſe*

and

and Perſecute Hereticks to the utmoſt of their Power: Nor were they contented to proceed by the common Rules of Juſtice upon Accuſations and Witneſſes; but all Forms were ſuperceded, and they by vertue of their *Paſtoral Authority*, (as if that had been given them to Worry their Sheep, and not to Feed them) objected Articles to their Priſoners upon ſuſpition, and required them to purge themſelves of them by Oath; and becauſe Biſhops were not perhaps all ſo equally Zealous and Cruel, ſome of them being Perſons of great Quality, ſo that ſome remnants of a generous Education, and of their lay pity, might ſtill hang about them; that bloody Man *Dominick* took this work to task, and his Order has ever ſince furniſhed the World with a ſet of *Inquiſitors*, compared to whom all that had ever dealt in Tortures in any former times were but Bunglers.

So far has this Melancholy Speculation of the Degeneracy of the Church of *Rome* carried me; they at laſt came to extol a Zeal againſt *Hereſie* as the higheſt Act of Piety towards God; and ſince Hereſie is reckoned by St. *Paul* among *the Works of the Fleſh*, it ſeemed as juſt to puniſh it in the ſevereſt manner, as it was to puniſh any of the other *Works of the Fleſh*; and ſince all Hereticks, were looked on as Perſons damned, all Tenderneſs towards them, and pity for them, was as far extinguiſhed as it was poſſible. For a falſe Religion will not eaſily have the better of good Nature ſo entirely, as to root it quite out; tho' it muſt be acknowledged that the *Roman Religion* has done more towards that, than any other that has ever yet appeared in the World. All the room that was left for good Nature, was the favourable Definition that was given of Hereſie; by which Obſtinacy was made its peculiar Character, that diſtinguiſhed it from Error, which lies in a more Innocent Miſtake concerning Divine Matters; and as many have explain'd this Obſtinacy, it amounts to a continuing in Error after one is convinced o it. This Notion of Hereſie, which has been received by many of the greateſt Men even in the Church of *Rome* it ſelf, ſeems to agree well with that of St. *Paul*'s ranking Hereſie among the *Works of the Fleſh*; for if it is meerly a miſtake in the Judgment, in which one continues, becauſe he cannot overcome his perſuaſion, nor ſee Reaſons that are ſtrong enough to oblige him to change his Mind, ſuch an adhering to Error may be called any thing rather than a *Work of the Fleſh*. But if a Man from a Principle of Intereſt, Pride, or Diſcontent, either throws himſelf into ill Opinions, or continues in them after his Mind is better enlightned, ſo that he ſtifles and denies that inward Conviction, then the Reaſon is very plain, why ſuch an ill Temper of Mind ſhould be reckoned a *Work of the Fleſh*, becauſe it plainly ariſes out of a depraved Nature.

I will not here enter into ſo troubleſome an Enquiry as it would be to examine how far an Erroneous Conſcience *acquits one before God; for that muſt be left to him, who will judge every Man according to his Works, and who beſt knows how far he will accept of a general Repentance of unknown Sins, and a general Act of Faith, even of Truths that are yet unknown; but as for the Judgments of Men, certainly when the other parts of ones Life make it clear, not only to a Judgment of Charity, but even to that of Diſcretion, that he is ſincere, and that he means well, it is hard to know when he is Obſtinate, and when his Errors become Hereſies, that is to ſay,* Works of the Fleſh.

So far have I been led upon the conſideration of the Spirit of Perſecution, *that is not only warranted by Cuſtom, and a long continued Practice; but is by the Authority not only of Popes, but even of General Councils, eſtabliſhed into a Law on the* Church of Rome. *I am carried next into a Scene of Thoughts that are more particularly ſuited to the Doctrines of the Reformed Churches; and here it muſt be acknowledged, that Perſecution is a more juſtifiable thing according to the Principles of the* Church of Rome, *than it is according to our Tenets; for the* Church of Rome, *that pretends to be Infallible, has a better Right to demand a blind Submiſſion from all its Subjects, and to treat thoſe roughly who refuſe to grant it, than a Church that pretends to nothing but a Power of Order and Government, and that confeſſes, ſhe may be miſtaken.* Our being Subject to Error, *is unreaſonably urged, when Men would carry it ſo far as to make us doubt of all things; yet it ought at leaſt to have this effect on us, as to keep us from being too ready to judge hardly of thoſe who are of another mind, or to uſe them roughly for it; ſince it is poſſible, that they may be in the Right, and that we may be miſtaken; at leaſt, they may have very probable Reaſons for their Opinions, which if they do not quite juſtify their Miſtakes, yet do very much excuſe and leſſen them. It is likewiſe viſible, that all ſevere Proceedings upon the diverſity of Opinions, how effectual ſoever they may be on baſe minded Men, who will always make Ship-wracks of a good Conſcience, when it comes in competition with the Love of this preſent World, yet work quite contrarywiſe on Men of awakned Underſtandings and generous Souls; inſtead of gaining on ſuch Perſons, theſe Inſpire them with horror at the ſort of Men who go about to ruin companies of People, that never did them hurt. It is from this, that thoſe Violent Hatreds ariſe among Men of different Perſuaſions. Every Man is not capable to underſtand an Argument, or to be much diſturbed at it; and tho' Divines that carry their Speculations further into the Conſequences of Opinions, whether Real or Imaginary, grow hot and angry at one another upon thoſe Heads, yet the People underſtand them little, and feel them leſs; but every Man feels an Injury, and Nature makes her Inferences very quick upon it; and concludes, that* thoſe who uſe us Ill, hate us

and there muſt be a great degree of Regeneration to keep Men from hating thoſe that hate them; upon this ariſes all the Animoſity that is among the ſeveral Parties; for every one reckoning himſelf a Member of that Body to which he aſſociates himſelf, thinks that he is obliged to reſent all the Injuries that are done to his Fellow-members, as much as if they were done to himſelf in particular; and by the ſame natural Logick, he caſts the Guilt of the Wrongs done his own Party, not only on thoſe Individuals of the other Party, from whom they did more Immediately ariſe, but upon the whole Body of them; and ſo here a War is kindled in Men's Breaſts, and when that is once formed within, it will find ſome unhappy occaſion or other to give it ſelf a vent. Thoſe who are ill uſed, are in a State, like that of a Maſs of humours in the Body, which roul about leſs perceived, till ſome unlucky Accident has weakned any part of it; and then they will all diſcharge themſelves on the part that ſuffers. Men that are uneaſie, naturally love Changes; for theſe are like the ſhifting of Poſtures, they give ſome preſent eaſe, and they flatter the Patient with the hope of more to follow.

The Advice that the old *Man* of *Samnium* ſent his *Son*, was certainly very wiſe; he had Intercepted the whole *Roman Army* in the Hills, ſhutting up the Paſſages ſo that they could neither go backward nor forward; the Father adviſed him firſt to diſmiſs them all without any Injury, ſince that would probably oblige the *Romans*; or if that were not followed, to cut them all off; for that would weaken them conſiderably; whereas the middle Method, which the *General* took, of letting them all go, having firſt put a publick Affront on them, enraged the *Romans* without weakning them. According to this Advice it ſeems evident, that all conſiderable Bodies of Men, that are in any State, are to be ſet at eaſe, or to be quite rooted out; and there is nothing wiſe in this ſevere Method, but an extream and an unrelenting Perſecution, and in this point, if the Church of Rome has forgot the Innocence of the Dove, yet it muſt be confeſſed, that ſhe has retained the Wiſdom of the Serpent.

Perſecution is not only hurtful to thoſe that ſuffer many hard things by it, but is likewiſe miſchievous to them, by the averſion that it inſpires in them to thoſe at whoſe hands they ſuffer, by the ill Habit of mind into which it throws them, and by thoſe violent Projects and Convulſions which do very naturally come into the heads of thoſe, who as they feel much, ſo they fear yet more.

Thoſe that do perſecute, tho' they ſeem to triumph for a while, with the Spoils of their Enemies; yet will ſoon feel how this ſinks their Credit extreamly among thoſe that were more Indifferent Spectators, while the Debate was managed with the Pen or Tongue, but they will certainly take part at leaſt in their Compaſſions with the Miſerable; and will be diſpoſed to think ill, not only of

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those Men that are heavy upon their harmless Neighbours, but even of the Cause it self, that is supported by such Methods.

The Multitude, even of the lowest Order of Men has a remnant of good Nature left, which shews it self in the sad looks that all put on at the Executions even of Malefactors: but if a false Religion has not quite extinguish'd Humanity in its Votaries, this will make a more sensible Impression, when Men that have done nothing amiss, and are only in fault because they cannot help thinking as they do, are made Sacrifices to the Rage of others, that perhaps have little more to say for themselves, but that they are in possession of the Law; which in the next Revolution of Affairs that may fall out, will be an Argument so much the Stronger for using themselves in the same manner, because it is a just Retaliation on them for that which they made others to suffer.

The Men of Persecution do also naturally engage themselves into the Intrigues of Courts, and all the Factions of Parties: they enter into Dependances upon Ministers of State, who drive them on to execute all their Passions, and to serve all their Ends: and who have too good understandings themselves not to laugh at the officious forwardness of those who are perhaps more eager than is intended, in the doing of that for which those very Persons, whose blind Instruments they are at one time, will reproach them at another.

In short, Persecution does extreamly vitiate the Morals of the Party that manages it. The worst Men, so they are furious and violent, are not only connived at, but are even courted: and Men otherwise of severer Morals, will insensibly slacken, by reason of their Engagements with vicious Men, whom they will find themselves forced to Cherish and Imploy: and if those who have persecuted others, fall under a Reverse of Fortune, and come to suffer themselves a little of that which they made others feel, as their ill behaviour will deprive them in a great measure, of those Compassions that would otherwise work towards them, so it will raise within them many uneasy Reflections upon their own Actings, which will prove but Melancholy Companions to them in their Afflictions: and these will force them to conclude, that because they shewed no Mercy, therefore they now meet with the requital of Judgment without Mercy; which how unjust soever it may be, in those by whom they suffer, yet they will find it meet to look unto God, and to confess, that just and righteous are all his Ways: and it may be reasonably apprehended, that it may have contributed not a little to fill up the Measure of the Sins of a Church, and to bring down severe strokes upon them, when the visible Danger, which was apparent from a formidable E-

nemy,

nemy, could not turn their Thoughts to that side, but that instead of using legal and just Precautions for their own Security, they let themselves loose to all the Rages of a mad Prosecution of some poor undiscreet and deluded People; and all thi to gratify their own Revenges, or to Insiuate themselves into the Favours of those who do now justly laugh at them, when the turn that they intended is served by their means: and those who would prepare themselves for those hard things which they have reason to expect from a Church that has always delighted to bath her self in Blood, ought seriously to profess their Repentance of this Fury in Instances that may be as visible and edifying as their Rage has been publick and destructive.

But there remains yet one point, without which I am sensible that this Discourse will appear defective; I know it is extream tender in our present Circumstances, yet that does not defer me from venturing on it; it is, *How far Protestants ought to Tolerate Papists.* It seems at first view the most unreasonable thing in the World, for those to pretend to it, who we are sure must destroy us, as soon as it is in their Power to do it. I say they must do it; since by those Councils, which they themselves hold to be General, the extirpation of Hereticks, and the breaking of Faith to them, has been so formally decreed, that it is a foolish piece of presumption to imagine that they can ever lay down those Principles. Infalllbility is the bottom upon which their Church is built, and she must be as infallible in the Rules that she gives of Morality, as she is in her Decisions in Points of Faith: for all the Reasons that are given for private Persons depending on the Church for the Rule of their Faith, do bind as strongly to depend likewise on the Church for the Rule of Life and Manners. If we are in Danger of forgetting, what was decreed in that Church so long ago, they take pains from time to time to refresh our Memories, not only by their Cruelties in the last Age, for which there was so much more to be said, than for later Barbarities, because the Reformation was lookt on as a revolt then made from established Laws: and if Persecution can be at any time excused, it is in the first beginnings of Heresies, before the Evil has spread it self into greater Numbers of Men: The Heats that were raised in the first Formation of that Breach, may some way take off from the guilt of the Sacrifices that they made: For Men in the first Surprises of Anger do seldom Reason true, or Act wisely; but when a whole Age has passed, and those first Heats are in a great measure laid, and when all the Securities that could possibly be demanded have been given, and while these have been Enacted into the most Obligatory Laws that could be contrived, which were confirmed by solemn Oaths; and while the Persons so secured had not given the least Pretence to their Enemies to say, that they had forfeited those Rights by any ill Behaviour of theirs; yet the Breach of Faith, and the Rage of Persecution, that we see before our Eyes, both in *France* and *Piedmont*, are things that do not only Raise an Indignation in humane Nature, that cannot be well governed, without a very Extraordinary Measure of Grace, but they offer even to our Reasons, Arguments against all Lenity towards them, that are very hard to be resisted: And it is certain, that all the Regulars, and chiefly the Jesuits, are so possessed with those Maxims, and with that Temper, that it is a Degree

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those Men that are heavy upon their harmless Neighbours, but even of the Cause it self, that is supported by such Methods.

The Multitude, even of the lowest Order of Men has a remnant of good Nature left, which shews it self in the sad looks that all put on at the Executions even of Malefactors: but if a false Religion has not quite extinguish'd Humanity in its Votaries, this will make a more sensible Impression, when Men that have done nothing amiss, and are only in fault because they cannot help thinking as they do, are made Sacrifices to the Rage of others, that perhaps have little more to say for themselves, but that they are in possession of the Law; which in the next Revolution of Affairs that may fall out, will be an Argument so much the Stronger for using themselves in the same manner, because it is a just Retaliation on them for that which they made others to suffer.

The Men of Persecution do also naturally engage themselves into the Intrigues of Courts, and all the Factions of Parties: they enter into Dependances upon Ministers of State, who drive them on to execute all their Passions, and to serve all their Ends: and who have too good understandings themselves not to laugh at the officious forwardness of those who are perhaps more eager than is intended, in the doing of that for which those very Persons, whose blind Instruments they are at one time, will reproach them at another.

In short, Persecution does extreamly vitiate the Morals of the Party that manages it. The worst Men, so they are furious and violent, are not only connived at, but are even courted: and Men otherwise of severer Morals, will insensibly slacken, by reason of their Engagements with vicious Men, whom they will find themselves forced to Cherish and Imploy: and if those who have persecuted others, fall under a Reverse of Fortune, and come to suffer themselves a little of that which they made others feel, as their ill behaviour will deprive them in a great measure, of those Compassions that would otherwise work towards them, so it will raise within them many uneasy Reflections upon their own Actings, which will prove but Melancholy Companions to them in their Afflictions: and these will force them to conclude, that because they shewed no Mercy, therefore they now meet with the requital of Judgment without Mercy; which how unjust soever it may be, in those by whom they suffer, yet they will find it meet to look unto God, and to confess, that just and righteous are all his Ways: and it may be reasonably apprehended, that it may have contributed not a little to fill up the Measure of the Sins of a Church, and to bring down severe strokes upon them, when the visible Danger, which was apparent from a formidable E-

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nemy, could not turn their Thoughts to that side, but that instead of using legal and just Precautions for their own Security, they let themselves loose to all the Rages of a mad Prosecution of some poor undiscreet and deluded People; and all thi to gratify their own Revenges, or to Insiuate themselves into the Favours of those who do now justly laugh at them, when the turn that they intended is served by their means: and those who would prepare themselves for those hard things which they have reason to expect from a Church that has always delighted to bath her self in Blood, ought seriously to profess their Repentance of this Fury in Instances that may be as visible and edifying as their Rage has been publick and destructive.

But there remains yet one point, without which I am sensible that this Discourse will appear defective; I know it is extream tender in our present Circumstances, yet that does not defer me from venturing on it; it is, *How far Protestants ought to Tolerate Papists.* It seems at first view the most unreasonable thing in the World, for those to pretend to it, who we are sure must destroy us, as soon as it is in their Power to do it. I say they must do it; since by those Councils, which they themselves hold to be General, the extirpation of Hereticks, and the breaking of Faith to them, has been so formally decreed, that it is a foolish piece of presumption to imagine that they can ever lay down those Principles. Infalllbility is the bottom upon which their Church is built, and she must be as infallible in the Rules that she gives of Morality, as she is in her Decisions in Points of Faith: for all the Reasons that are given for private Persons depending on the Church for the Rule of their Faith, do bind as strongly to depend likewise on the Church for the Rule of Life and Manners. If we are in Danger of forgetting, what was decreed in that Church so long ago, they take pains from time to time to refresh our Memories, not only by their Cruelties in the last Age, for which there was so much more to be said, than for later Barbarities, because the Reformation was lookt on as a revolt then made from established Laws: and if Persecution can be at any time excused, it is in the first beginnings of Heresies, before the Evil has spread it self into greater Numbers of Men: The Heats that were raised in the first Formation of that Breach, may some way take off from the guilt of the Sacrifices that they made: For Men in the first Surprises of Anger do seldom Reason true, or Act wisely; but when a whole Age has passed, and those first Heats are in a great measure laid, and when all the Securities that could possibly be demanded have been given, and while these have been Enacted into the most Obligatory Laws that could be contrived, which were confirmed by solemn Oaths; and while the Persons so secured had not given the least Pretence to their Enemies to say, that they had forfeited those Rights by any ill Behaviour of theirs; yet the Breach of Faith, and the Rage of Persecution, that we see before our Eyes, both in *France* and *Piedmont*, are things that do not only Raise an Indignation in humane Nature, that cannot be well governed, without a very Extraordinary Measure of Grace, but they offer even to our Reasons, Arguments against all Lenity towards them, that are very hard to be resisted: And it is certain, that all the Regulars, and chiefly the Jesuites, are so possessed with those Maxims, and with that Temper, that it is a Degree

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of Credulity scarce to be reconciled to common Prudence, to [illegible] ever they can change their Natures. Those Notions [illegible] with their first Education; they are rettled [illegible] dicated not only to their Church, but to the [illegible] expect no dilmission, but by their Activity [illegible] to Hate us, and to pursue our Ruin by all [illegible] Receipts for the greatest sins, if the Penitent [illegible] and the Pardon of Sin will be thought a good [illegible] be the Destruction of Hereticks.

I know the Jesuits study to perswade the World, and that they have insused it into a great Prince, that P. de la Chaise has had no hand in the Violences now on foot in France, but that he has opposed them, [illegible] entirely on the Arch-Bishop of Paris, and on a Lady that [illegible] so ready are they to Sacrifice the Reputation even of their chief Patrons, when it may serve their turn to deceive others; but the contrary of this is so evident, that it is a new Discovery of the Impudence of that sort of Men. Yet after all this, and after all that can be said from those Principles, that subject them to a foreign Jurisdiction, and that vest the Pope with a Power of Deposing Heretical Princes, where I acknowledge the Inferences are so just as well as Inslevere, that I know not how to answer them well to my self; yet the Body of the People, that are bred up to the other Points of Popery, and that know nothing of these, which their Priests keep as Mysteries from them, and either deny them quite, or disguise them so that they have in other Colours to those who believe implicitly, and who do not give themselves the trouble to enquire into such matters; but think it is safer, as well as easier, to take things upon trust; they I say, are not so formidable as to raise our Fears and Jealousies to so high a pitch; and Secular Priests are naturally a softer sort of Men, who have not the fourness that seems to belong to all the Orders that are among them; nor are they so far possessed with the ill-natured and dangerous Opinions that belong to that Church, as to be past cure; and as a softning of rigour towards such would lay the Apprehensions that Self-preservation does naturally raise in all People, so it would at least make the utmost degree of Severity, that seems reconcilable to the Common Principles of Humane Society, or of Christianity, appear more justifiable, if a settledness under such ease Circumstances should afterwards drive a Government to it. But the returning of the Severities that our Brethren have suffered at the Hands of the Men of that Religion on the Papists of England, is a Practice so contrary to the Christian Religion, and to the Principles of the Protestant Religion, that I do not think to say it, that I had rather see the Church of England fall under a very severe Persecution from the Church of Rome, than see it fall to persecute Papists, when it should come to its turn to be able to do it. The former will only serve to secure us among our selves, and to purge us from our Dross, and in particular from any of the Leaven of the Doctrine of Persecution, that we have not yet quite thrown out; but the other would very much [illegible] pure and best constituted Church in the World; and it would be [illegible] such to the Cruelty of that Church, which we cannot enough detest [illegible] how much soever we must hate their Corruption, we must still remember, that they are Men and Christians, tho' perhaps of a course grain, and that we our selves are Reformed Christians, who in Imitation of our Blessed Master, must still endeavour to overcome evil with good.

FINIS.